

The Practical Guide to Exciting Presentations



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THE PRACTICAL GUIDE TO EXCITING PRESENTATIONS

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Planning a Presentation

What's it for – and who's it for?

So your boss has asked you to give a presentation on a product to some interested clients. And now that you know a little more about the principle of business communication, you will realise that to make your presentation effective you will have to address those two basic needs – the need to know, and the need to connect.

So two questions that will require answering are “**What is it for?**” because this will dictate the information which will be needed; and of course “**Who is it for?**” which will decide what emotional triggers you may need to include to appeal to your audience's personal needs.

You will not be able to answer either of these questions unless you know your product or service extremely well and unless you know the requirements and needs of the people you are speaking to. So you will need to do some homework; and research into your client. What are their requirements, why they are interested in this product, and what will they use it for? These are just some of the questions that you will have to consider before you even sit down to create the presentation.

So take some time to research the potential customer or client, you will find that your presentation can be directly aimed at what they want and what they need. Engaging immediately with client's needs will give you a more positively inclined listener; and that can't be bad for business.

Your Presentation or Theirs?

If your company engages in a number of presentations, or if the product is produced by another organisation or company, you may find that the presentation has already been created, and all you need to do is stand up and get nervous.

But, with a new understanding of what is required to create truly effective communication, you may have a different idea on how it can be presented. Where it is a product presentation, you may not have much control on what information is included, but you should be able to structure the presentation to appeal directly to the client's personal agenda.

At least, if you are using the producer's presentation you can be reasonably certain that the information is at least current and correct. Unfortunately if the presentation has been created by your organisation, and unless they have a routine of regularly checking their standard presentations, you can sometimes find that the information included has been upgraded or changed since the last time it was used; changes that are not reflected in the material.

If you are simply handed the presentation with the instruction to “*Go and present this*” it is in your best interests to check it out thoroughly. Make sure that facts and figures are accurate; that specifications are still current – in fact make sure that every detail in the presentation is up to date and effective. Unless you do so, you could find yourself being brought down to earth by a knowledgeable customer saying something like “*But wasn't that changed in 2001?*” or “*I think you will find that those figures are no longer accurate*” As your

effectiveness as a presenter depends on you being accepted as the credible expert, this is not going to help your reputation or that of your company.

However, If you are asked to give a presentation on a topic, product or service from scratch, so much the better. Because now you have the freedom to create a truly successful presentation that will achieve your goals as well as inform and convince your customers.

But either way, remember it must provide for the two basic needs – information, and connection. That will take planning and organisation.

Getting There – planning and organisation

Before we begin, we need to know some more essential things. We have already considered the ‘what’ and the ‘who’ - but now we need to think about the “**where**” and the ‘**when**’! And equally important is the ‘**how long for**’ category.

You might now be thinking “*When do we get to the presentation – why have I got to go through all this stuff!*” Well, it’s all to do with the aim of your presentation. What do you want the outcome to be, once you have given the presentation? What exactly is it supposed to do?

If it is just to inform, then it may not be necessary to invest so much time into researching who the listeners are going to be, and that will change the focus of the presentation. But if the desired outcome is to inform and convince the client to buy; then we will have to change the focus and the way in which we present the facts and details; and we will be more attentive to creating an emotional connection with the information along the way.



It’s rather like a railway journey. Before we set off, we need to know exactly where it is we are going to. Unless we have the final destination in mind, we may take the wrong train, get out at the wrong station, or change trains in the wrong place. Any one of these incorrect choices will prevent us from arriving at where it is we really needed to go.

The aim of your presentation is the destination, the final station. When you are creating your presentation from scratch you need to plan your journey to make sure that each station that you pass through will lead you closer to the destination.

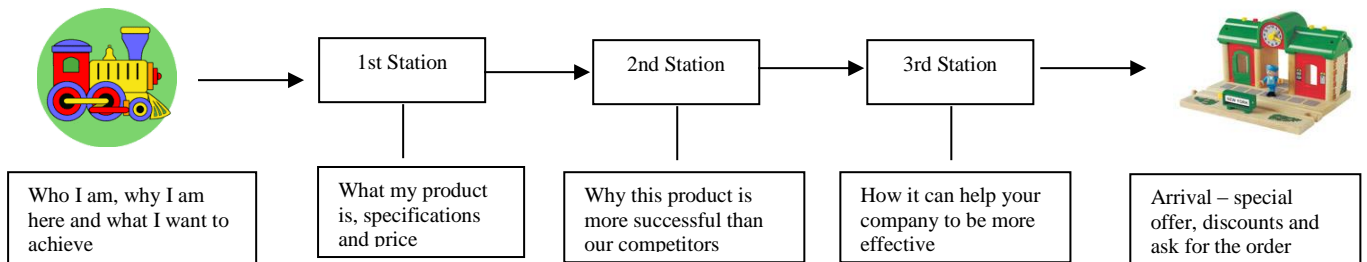
So with that aim in mind, you need to review your information and choose only that which is vital to lead you through the stages to the final station. Each vital piece of information will be one of the stations that you rattle through on your journey to the destination.

Exactly what this information is will depend on who you are talking to, what you want to achieve and how long you have to do it in. You will have to choose exactly what you need to complete the journey; but the sequence of the journey is the same. First, you need to get to the first station and enquire about the journey. You will need to tell the listener just who you are, where you are going and what you intend to do.

Next, looking at the map you will trace the route you will be travelling on, listing the stations along the way so that you know how far you have travelled.

And finally, you will be ready to collect your bits and pieces all together again before you reach the last station and finally alight from the train, knowing that you have successfully arrived at your planned destination.

For example – if I wanted to convince you to purchase my product, my rail journey might look like this.



Only information which is essential to achieving the aim should be included.

When creating presentations we need to be mindful of time. We are allocated only a small part of our audience’s time and we must use it effectively. Keeping in mind our ultimate goal, we must plan our journey to reach the destination in the time frame allowed

Failing to maintain accurate timing, is a sign of disrespect. It is in fact saying that *‘my time is more important than your time – so sit and listen until I am finished’* I am sure that if someone said that to you aloud you would be furious. Our clients may not receive the message so clearly, but they will be aware that you have little respect for their time. It is a dangerous process, so avoid it like the plague.

Therefore, plan your work carefully, arrange your information for the journey precisely, and have a clear idea where it is you are going, and especially what it is you want to do when you get there. Good organisation is the key to effective presentation.

Selecting Your Visual Assistants

When considering presentations most beginners will immediately think about the visual components; and invariably that will be PowerPoint!! – let's start right in with the Slide Show.

One of the major problems with PowerPoint is that it becomes the major part of the presentation. It is the presenter, and you are just the operator.

But think again, about the basic requirement of good communication. Consider the two needs that we must meet to make our communication effective; and think if a PowerPoint Slide Show is going to achieve that outcome.

PowerPoint will certainly be of great help to fulfilling the intellectual part of the equation, but to connect emotionally with people takes another human being. People motivate and enthuse. It is people that make personal connections; it is people that create the emotional climate that is needed for decisions to be made in our favour. People – not PowerPoint!



All visual props used to support and extend our presentations are merely aids; they are the assistants, not the presenter. And we need to ensure that we are at the heart of the presentation and not our equipment.

Before choosing a visual aid for your presentation you need to think carefully about how you are going to use them. The following ideas may help you decide which one is just right for your presentation:

- Visibility - It may sound obvious but the visual aid you use must be able to be seen by the audience. If you have to say, "*Well, I know you can't all see this*", then you shouldn't use the aid. If people have to strain to see the visual they will not be focused on what you are saying.
- Suitable – if you are asked for a very short contribution, there is absolutely no need to go over the top with a magnificent PowerPoint presentation. And if you are talking about the poisonous snakes of Australia, it is better to use a video than a live snake. Larger audiences need different visual aids than smaller ones
- Availability – Make sure that the equipment needed for the aid is available, and make sure of this well in advance of the presentation. It is no use arriving at a venue with a great PowerPoint display only to find that there is no computer or projector available. Or arriving at a small hall in the country with an data projector, to find there are no extension leads and the only available power point is not suitably located.

In recent years it appears that PowerPoint has always been the assistant of choice, however with the above in mind we might question if this should always be our first choice. There are times and places where other types could be more effective and efficient. But if you have only just moved into presenting you may not be aware of the variety of visual aids available.

Don't be Flippant about Flip Charts

While our unassuming block of butcher's paper has taken a back seat to its more high tech cousins, it still has some fantastic features which may be of great help to you.

Imagine this – you have arrived at the venue to find the whole place in uproar! Power's off; computers are down; lap tops can't be connected to data thingies and chaos ensues. However, having done this workshop, you have taken the precaution of throwing your flip chart in the back of the car. All you need is to make sure there is enough natural light and a set of marking pens and some BluTac and you are ready to rock and roll! You will be greeted with cries of joy and your reputation is made!

The great value of a flip chart is in its simplicity. Just consider these attractive attributes:

- **It has no moving parts.** It therefore cannot breakdown; lose extension cords, or blow a bulb. It never sulks and is never incompatible. It is in fact perfectly reliable, and will serve you willing to the very last page.
- **It is inexpensive.** You don't need thousands of dollars' worth of complicated equipment to make it work. A cheap packet of ordinary marker pens is all you need and with these you can add colour and charm to your hearts content. The more the merrier, because it doesn't cost the earth and mistakes are compostable.
- **It is portable.** Oh the joy of not having to lug case loads of equipment into lifts or up the stairs. A simple carry case slung over your shoulder and pens in pocket, and you are ready to impress and amaze at any time, in any location and without blood sweat and tears just trying to get there. While a flip chart holder is nice, it is not essential and you can do just as well with a packet of BluTac and a spare wall.
- **It is environmentally friendly.** If the pages are treated carefully we can actually use them again. And of course, since they are made of paper, they are recyclable and compostable. Try that with a laptop and data processor!

Get to know the flip charts a little better, they have hidden talents, and if you want to run an interactive presentation they can be invaluable.

Learn more about Flip Charts

The Flip Chart family has two main uses when supporting a presentation; they can be used as a visual aid for the presenter – and it is a great tool for displaying group work.

- **Visual Aid for the Presenter**

There are some professions, such as engineers, architects, scientists and designers that relate much more to the visual process than to static information. These spatially-orientated people often draw out their ideas to visualise their thoughts.

In presenting information to them, it really connects if you can mirror their normal thought process. As you explain the sequence of an operation (for instance) it will really connect with these people if you draw out the diagram bit by bit as you talk them through the process.

Diagrams etc can be pre-prepared using a simple lead pencil and at the presentation you take your marker pen and trace off the appropriate part of the diagram as required to demonstrate your information. You can also change colours to highlight important sections. It is much easier to use a flip chart to present complicated diagrams than to spend a week concocting them on PowerPoint.

- **Displaying Group Work**

When we are working in groups, we often need a way to capture our ideas and conclusions. The flip chart is ideal for this kind of work. Its portability, its lack of cost and its flexibility comes to the fore in this situation. Use it when involved in problem solving, decision making, planning or team building and it is invaluable when brainstorming.

How to Get the Best out of your Willing Worker – the Flip Chart

Here are the 9 simple rules for effectiveness

1. Flip Charts, work better in smaller groups. When used with larger groups these lose their immediacy and can be difficult to see.
2. If you are writing on the flip chart, or tracing out a prepared diagram, do not talk while you are working. Two reasons, talking with your back to people is simply bad manners, and secondly, your voice will be projected into the flip chart. So your listeners will be both annoyed with you for being rude, and frustrated with you because they can't hear you. So, don't do it.
3. Stand sideways while writing, it avoids being rude and allows the audience to see what it is you are doing. This way you command their attention.
4. Print rather than write, and make sure that your letters are large enough to be read from the back of the room. Err on the side of too large, rather than too small.
5. Keep your information to just seven words per line, and no more than seven lines per page. This way you avoid overwhelming your audience with information.



6. Leave a blank sheet of paper between used pages. Some pens bleed through and make it impossible to read the next sheet and, written words or highlighted diagrams being visual will attract the audience's attention. This means they will be looking at the visual rather than listening to your words of wisdom. Turning up a blank sheet will avoid this distraction.
7. If possible, use water based pens as these do not bleed through the paper so much. And if you make an error during the preparation of the flip chart you can use white out to cover small areas or individual letters. For larger areas, cover the error with a pasted double layer of flip-chart paper, then make the correction.
8. If you need to refer to information which you have prepared, tab the page with post-it notes or masking tape. You can also use them to indicate sheets you may wish to go back to during the presentation.
9. Use colour – lots of it. Colour attracts the eye and can have an emotional impact on the audience (remember the two requirements of communication). However, Red and Green cannot be distinguished by those who are colour-blind – Red is also difficult to see from a distance and while it is effective in certain cases, it should be avoided as a colour used for imparting information.

Stick to high contrast colours like black, blue, purple, dark green, and avoid pastel shades such as yellow.

So while the Flip Chart has been overshadowed in recent years, it is still an effective and valuable tool in certain situations.

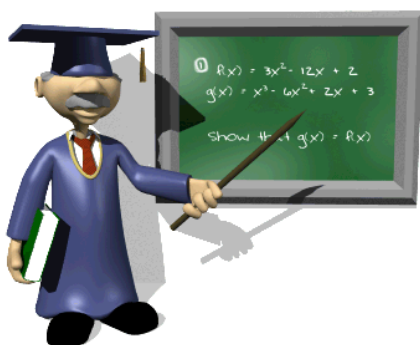
Using the Boards

I am talking about the White Boards, the Black Boards, the Chalk Boards and the Magnetic Boards!

These are often overlooked when planning the presentation, but each have a vital role to play in certain circumstances. Each one of the Board family have different benefits, and you need to get familiar with them, and decide if they would enhance your next presentation.

The Chalk Board

The Chalk Board is probably the least often used. Usually found in schools and other institutes of learning they have almost vanished from the tool kit of today's presenter. However, there is always the unexpected, and so the effective presenter may find some of this information useful.



Chalk Boards are usually a fixed asset, although some times you can find a portable variety. They are used to capture immediate thoughts or issues that arise from the discussion or questions. They are immediate, and highly changeable. Information can be erased, restated and changed without any other piece of equipment other

than a rag (for the make-do individual) or a specialised board eraser (For the slightly more prepared).

Like all aids you need to know a few things about them if you are to become familiar with their characteristics – so here are the 5 rules you need to know when dealing with the Chalk Board.

1. Normal handwriting (contrary to what our teachers may have thought) does not work with chalk boards. Try printing instead. You do not need to use capital letters throughout but simple printing is much more readable.
2. Don't write out screeds of information; use bullet points to capture the essentials of your information.
3. Use a special chalk board ruler, or prepare horizontal lines. Most people, because of the angle of writing, produce information that rises as it progresses across the board. This makes it most difficult to read.
4. Coloured chinks are available but the same rules apply as when using flip charts. And as chalk does not have the depth of colour that marking pens do it is often much more effective to stick to lighter colours on dark chalk boards.
5. Try to avoid that dreadful sound of chalk screeching in pain. Smooth surfaces on chalk pieces tend to cause this; so if it happens to you break the chalk in two to create a better surface which writes more freely and much quieter.

The Magnetic Board

The magnetic board can be a useful tool in the presenter's pack, as it is great at holding information in windy conditions in outdoor locations. It is often used by military trainers when in a field situation.

The strength of the magnetic strips can keep paper or card firmly anchored to the board in all but extreme conditions. If you have to give a presentation in an outside location it may be worth your while using a Magnetic Board.

The mechanics are simple, the board is formed from magnetic material on which is placed the prepared information written on stout paper or cardboard. A simple piece of magnetic tape is stuck onto the back. Or you can use button magnets to anchor your information. But avoid fridge magnets – they are not strong enough.

A word processor can be used to create the information, which is presented in bullet point form, but the font must be large enough to be seen from a distance. While you can use colour, the same rules apply regarding the visibility of certain colours. However there are other ways that information can be presented by using a magnetic board.



Magnetic tape can be used on the back of photographs, laminated charts and there are all sorts of things you can put onto the board. It actually is quite versatile and many other uses for the board can be found.

If you choose to use the magnetic board, remember these few rules:

1. Clean the board properly and make sure that it is still magnetic.
2. Use rather more magnetic strip than you think you will need. If you are using the material in an outside location it is better to be safe. Having to chase after strips of magnetic information in a high wind will not enhance your stature as a presenter.
3. Magnetic Boards can be cumbersome to lug around, so get someone else to carry it.
4. Keep your information in the order in which it will be needed. It is frustrating for the presenter, but amusing for the audience, for you to have to search through a pile of information strips to find the right one.

If we need to make a presentation in an outside location a Magnetic Board could be the ideal visual aid.

The White Boards

The whiteboard (also known as the 'Dry Erase Marker Board') is simple and effective to use, and can range from the plain free standing unadorned one to the highly technical, interactive example.

The Simple Whiteboard



In its most basic form the whiteboard is an upmarket chalk board. It is used to capture ideas and opinions. It can demonstrate tricky calculations, depict ingenious diagrams and summarise discussions. All the things that relate to the use of the chalk are also relevant when using the whiteboard.

The difference in the equipment (Whiteboard markers, rather than chalk, and a special type of eraser instead of a piece of rag) does not disguise the fact that the whiteboard is the chalk board re-invented. It has all the same attributes; it has the same set of rules too:

- Whiteboards can be fixed or portable.

- They are best used to record issues that arise from discussion; they are almost essential for use in brain storming activities.
- They provide the ideal base for those calculations and diagrams.
- When using the whiteboard printing is much more readable than writing.
- Use bullet points rather than complete sentences when listing information.
- Use the appropriate pens, but if you should make a mistake permanent markers can be removed by writing or scribbling over with the **whiteboard** marker, wait 30 seconds and then use the eraser. This is best for small areas only. Another tip I have used is aerosol deodorant or even hairspray and a tissue! I always carry some in my bag just in case, as I am well known for committing this particular sin.
- If there has been a large mistake – then you will need the proper whiteboard cleaner, Alcohol based products can also be used in an emergency or even nail polish remover. Avoid such products as Brass cleaner, which have been suggested in some publications, as they contain minute quantities of abrasive material which can damage the surface of the whiteboard.
- Use high contrast colours on the board, but in my experience it best to choose either black or blue pens, as the red and green ones are often not dark enough to register a strong enough contrast, This makes them difficult to read.

The whiteboard in its most basic state is a great aid to demonstrate and record items which arise out of the presentation. It is perfect to provide an immediate visual component to the presentation which may help to clarify and inform. They are justly popular throughout a variety of venues around the country.

The Interactive Whiteboard

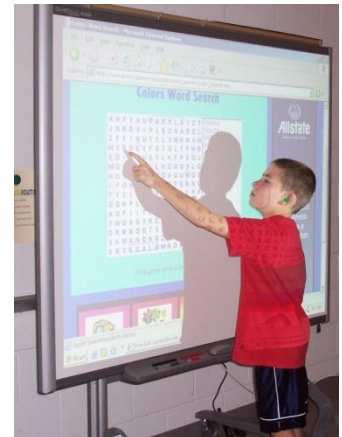
Between the simple whiteboards and the interactive example, there are a number of boards that have updated and useable features. Some can be both a simple whiteboard and also a magnetic board. Others allow you to press a button and the written text disappears around an invisible corner allowing a new and cleaner area to take its place.

The first time I was faced with this one, I inadvertently pressed the wrong button and watched with dismay as my information disappeared from sight. I was slightly mollified when I was shown that it would come back into view with the press of another button, as sharp and as clear as if it had never departed the scene. However, it was a very nasty moment, and I have made it my practice to find out about the intricacies of the white board before I start with my presentation in plenty of time to become familiar with it. I recommend this practice to anyone faced with a whiteboard of unknown behavioural patterns.

The newer and modern highly interactive whiteboard is an entirely different matter. On this very sophisticated piece of equipment you can display your computer desktop and then interact with the information.

It allows the presenter to access and display information from the internet, it can run live video from a camera, and allow CD-ROM presentations and control software from a single location. Connect it to a computer and a processor, and the interactive whiteboard becomes part of a high-class presentation tool for modern presenters.

The interactive whiteboard is touch-sensitive, where your finger becomes the control rather than the mouse or the pen. With just a light touch of the finger you can immediately access and control functions on your computer; or you can write or draw and even highlight on the board using the special electronic pens and erasures.



In fact when connected to a computer, the whiteboard become a large computer screen which functions as a "live" computer desktop. By using the image on the whiteboard, merely tapping the surface of the board can pull down menus, highlight, and move or open files.

You can also circle important parts of the detail directly onto the projected image. Using the electronic pens you can draw geometric figures, add information and underline the precise words you want to emphasise. Then when you have got all this information just as you want it, you can save the screen — complete with its new additions — which you can then e-mail to those who were not able to attend the presentation, or make it available on a shared server, or even print out the amended data from the screen.

- While most interactive whiteboards connect to computers via USB cables, some more recent models use Bluetooth technology. There are a variety of types in use today, and some will need LCD projectors in order to project a computer image onto the interactive whiteboard. However, others have an integrated projector behind the screen. If you are going to a venue where there is one of these, make sure you get a run through first

Using any of the boards can be a real asset in getting your message across.



But with the best equipment in the world, you will not get your listeners excited about what you are saying without that emotional input but more of that later!

OK You've been very patient!

Presenting PowerPoint!

When we first start thinking about presentations, our first thought turns to PowerPoint, or any of the other computer based presentation software. I know of a number of people who often give a presentation, and who actually create the PowerPoint slides only and that's it. It serves as the script, the notes and the handouts. This may be fine, and the software can do all of that. But even with the greatest software package, and brilliant PowerPoint slide show, it can only work if it is based on the strong communication skills of preparation, organisation and planning.

The PowerPoint is not the communicator – it should be the assistant. Relying on computer generated slides as the basic structure for your presentation fails the two needs test of communication.

Remember:

- The Need to Know,
- and**
- The Need to Connect

Any one of these fabulous, fantastic artificial communication substitutes will easily satisfy the need to know part – but what do they do that emotionally connects the clients, customers or audience with the message. How can an inanimate object enthuse and inspire people to want to do something about the information so precisely presented?

Never forget that you the presenter are the star of the show – the PowerPoint is just an adjunct. **It is People that inspire and motivate People.** It is you who will need to make your listeners aware and create a willingness to decide one way or another if they want to buy into your message. Computer generated slides can never do that for you.



When an excited and enthusiastic presenter knows how to use the PowerPoint tool correctly there is magic in the air. The PowerPoint informs and the speaker connects. It is the perfect communication – but it is not often seen.

Far too often the Slide Show becomes the presentation; even to the point that all that the presenter does is read off the slide. I consider they do this because deep down they really believe that we can't read.

Some of the problems arise from the very versatility of the software, there are so many things that can be included, things whizz in from the right, left or centre; fading in and fading out; bangs, crashes and bird song and coloured balloons, circles, squares. All these effects help to make the slide outstanding and we can get a slide full of **bells and whistles** in which the effects are so over the top that the message gets lost.

So when creating the style of your presentation avoid creating your whole presentation on the PowerPoint and **then just read it**, - and from behind the lectern!

PowerPoint is supposedly user-friendly, and it is simple to understand, and once you get your head around what the software can do, it is relatively easy to create the slides. But when things do go wrong, it can be a real problem. And when something does go wrong and you can't fix it, you lose credibility in the eyes of the audience; and not just about your knowledge of the equipment, but about the whole substance of your presentation and of your message. Being unable to operate a sophisticated piece of equipment does not lend authority to you or the topic you are speaking on.

Learn to create a PowerPoint presentation that enhances what you want to say and helps you stay focused on what you are talking about and what you want to achieve.

Because for all the faults, there are some very good reasons for using PowerPoint.

Benefits

PowerPoint is relatively user friendly.

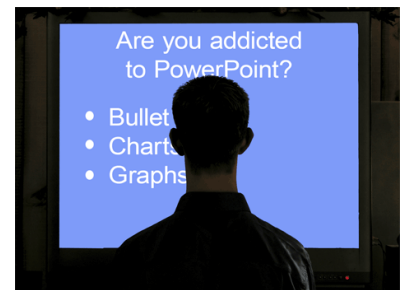
Using PowerPoint is much more effective for **larger audiences** and ideal for technical presentations. If we use it correctly and frame it properly, it is an excellent way of keeping you on track and moving forward towards the final goal.

And because it is usually hooked up to the lap top, what appears on the wide screen behind or above you is also on the screen of the laptop. By placing the lap top carefully, you can keep your eye on what is appearing behind you by watching the laptop screen. This allows you to maintain contact with the audience at all time. And we shall see why this is important later.

Avoid the urge to turn and check the information is actually up on the big screen. This disconnects you from your audience. And do not move between the projector and the screen. You will become a silhouette, and definitely annoy your audience.

Because the presentation has been pre-planned, the fact that the presentation is right before you allows the system to be used as a **prompt for the presenter**, if you know your material really well, and you should, it is almost as good as your notes!

It also ensures that the **presentation is kept on track**, the way in which you have programmed the presentation is going to be the way in which it is presented.



As with all graphic and visual aids, often we can reduce complex ideas to visual concepts with pictures, graphs and diagrams. PowerPoint has great ability to do this very effectively.

So now we are aware of the problems and the benefits, maybe we should look at some ideas for using PowerPoint effectively

Guidelines for creating slides

- **Create your slides from your organisational plan.** Remembering that you will be the one to explain and enthuse, keep your slides simple and to the point. Because content is all important create your slides in the '**Outline View**' before you even think about colours, themes and fonts.

If you are not familiar with selecting '**Outline**' you can get there by clicking 'View' menu and selecting 'Outline'. But perhaps the easiest way is to simply click on the "outline" tool button found at the bottom left of your screen. (it's the one with all the lines on)

This view will only show the text of the slide, and you can move through by clicking on 'Tab' for a lower level and Shift-Tab to move to a higher level

By using Outline View, you will be focusing on the content, the need to know. And once that is right you can have fun with the visual stuff.

- Maintain **consistency in the template** or slide format throughout the presentation. Once you start considering the visual side you need to decide on a template. You are able to use one of the standard prepared templates which makes it very easy to start out. Or you are able to create your own templates. Whichever you choose, maintaining the same design template gives a sense of continuity to the whole, so avoid changing the basic format half way through the presentation.
- Choose a **high contrast** colour scheme. One of the problems facing us when creating our slides is that the projector will actually dull the impact of the colour. So what we see on our computer screen will not be what appears on the projected image.

So we need very high contrast between our text and our background to ensure our audience can actually see what is on the screen. Light coloured writing on dark backgrounds, or vice versa, My preference is for a dark blue background with white letters – but that is a personal preference; as long as the contrast is high it should not matter.

- **Except avoid the colour RED** –, red is really difficult to read for elderly people and sometimes impossible for those who are colour blind.
- With PowerPoint being used for much larger audiences, the guidelines for slides are **6 lines to a slide, and 6 words per line**. This is known as the "**Rule of Sixes**". It is best to use a simple font such as Ariel or Verdana, and -
- **Choose the right font size.** If we maintain the "Rule of Sixes" we will probably choose the right fonts size anyway. But the text must be large enough to see and personal experience has found that **Text points** are best somewhere between 24 and 48, using

differing text sizes only to emphasise important points.

The size of the screen will also impact on the size of the image being projected. If you have to use a small screen in a relatively large room the image may be too small to be effective. In this case, if no other screen is available, I often choose to use a plain wall. If this is also unavailable, I am left only with the choice of moving the chairs closer to the screen which creates either a feeling of intimacy – or an overwhelming sense of claustrophobia.

- Use just the **keywords** or dot points to prompt you in your explanation and to direct the audience to the ideas. Remember, that it is your enthusiasm and energy that will connect with the audience and make them far more willing to connect with the information.

Don't use **Uppercase or underline**, the art of PowerPoint is simplicity, if you need to emphasise a particular word or sentence, use boldface. It will really stand out. However the big question is -

- **Do we need moving text?** We all know that movement attracts our attention. If you don't believe me just watch at the next meeting at what happens when someone comes in late. It doesn't matter how discreet they try to be, or how unobtrusive. Every eye will turn to them, and there will be that awkward pause before we continue with what we were doing.

The same thing happens when we use the software to enable our text to 'fly in'. Moving text can alert the audience that something new is coming up, so... I think that it is a valuable tool for a presenter, but I know that some presenters find it annoying. If you are one who does then select the "Appear" from the effects menu and your words will miraculously pop instantaneously out of nowhere. It may startle the audience, but they won't have to wait until they stop to read them.

This goes for any moving option that stays on the screen, such as the pointer that moves across the screen when you use the mouse. To turn this annoyance off simply press the **Control and the H key together**. This will prevent that annoying arrow dance across the screen; and when you want it back merely press the A key.

- **Please - only animate as required.** PowerPoint uses animation to direct the audience's attention only to that idea that we are discussing at the present time. That is the whole idea behind the dimming effect after the next idea is presented. It allows a summary to be retained, but the highlight is on the idea under consideration.
- **Did you know that you can actually draw on the screen during your presentation?** Some do, some don't! So if you don't, but would like to be more interactive with your PowerPoint presentation this is an easy way to do it.

During the presentation, or in "Slide Show" mode, press the **Control and the P keys together**. You will see either a pen or a red dot displayed on the screen. Using the mouse you can move it around the screen and when you want to draw a line, or an arrow, or circle a word just press the left hand mouse button and draw.



You now have arrows pointing to important stuff, or vital words circled in bright red (hmm bad luck for the elderly or colour blind!). If you want to erase what you have just created press the **E Key**; and to remove the pen or the red spot from the screen press the **A Key** or the **Ctrl-H key** combination.

- **Jump to Any Slide** – when we were discussing Overhead Projectors we highlighted the benefit of being able to pick out a slide we had already used if we needed to go back to it. PowerPoint can actually do the same. It may not be quite so simple, but it can be done.

But you will need to know the numbers of your slides, and it is very simple to print out a list of slide titles and their numbers through the Outline View, by using the button on the left hand side of the screen to collapse the details. Now print the view, and keep it handy with your presentation notes.

If you need to refer back to a slide, you can jump straight to it by typing in the slide number on the keyboard and pressing enter – simple. The computer will move you straight to the numbered slide. However, a small warning, **take note of the slide you were on** before you jumped, as you will have to do the same actions in reverse to return to where you were.

This is a very useful trick if you need to refer back to information previously shown, especially to clarify queries, or to answer questions.

- **How to remove the image from the screen.** We have said that your slides should be dot points, allowing you the flexibility to talk about the topic using the emotional factors that we will be talking about.

But sometimes, we may want to talk about something else before we move onto the next slide. It is confusing to still have an unrelated image beaming down at us from a large screen. It is a distraction, so how can we blank that out, without all the rigmarole of shutting the projector down, and having to power up again - well, we have a choice -

Do we want a blank black screen, or should it be white? If we choose black, merely press the **B key**; and should we prefer white, we simply press the **W key**.

My personal preference is for a black screen, I find it more muted and therefore less intrusive – but you may prefer to have a white screen.

When you want the image back again just press the **B or W key** again - PowerPoint really is a wonderful tool if it is used properly.

- **Always keep a back up of your presentation on a different computer or flash drive.**

Enhancing your Presentation Skills

So far we have discussed the information aspect of the communication process. Getting our ideas and information organised to ensure that it achieves the aim, or the goal of our presentation.

We have looked at, in some depth, the visual aids which will assist in getting the information to our listeners coherently and logically. If we use these visual aids wisely, we have produced a good creative way to ensure that we are kept on track, and make certain that we cover all the essential points required to satisfy the **need to know**.

It is now time to look at the second half of communication's needs. - The need to connect. If we cannot make that essential connection, we will fail to achieve the presentation's aim. We need to look at ways in which we can enhance our personal presentation skills to ensure that we make that vital connection with our client, our customers, our listeners and our audience.

There are two essential skills we need to practice to create the energy and enthusiasm and to pass that passion onto our listeners. They are affirming **Body Language** with Gestures and **vivid vocal quality**. But both come under the banner of "Stage Presence" which covers confidence, credibility and positivity.

Remember the last time you met someone who... well who just didn't jell with you. What was it that sounded that soft alarm? Was it something they said? Probably not, we are well aware of what people say to us, and we are quite sure when someone has offended or annoyed us. No, if it was what had been said, then we would know about it.

So what was it that made you instinctively turn away from this person emotionally? Well, it was probably something about the body language that did not affirm the words you were hearing. Research has shown that if a person's body language does not match up with their words, we emotionally connect with the visual and disbelieve the verbal.

Often it could be nothing more than a passing expression, so fleeting that we are not really consciously aware of it; but we are left with an instinctive feeling of unease.

As a presenter, we need to be credible; and for us to be believable we need to convince our audience that we truly believe in the message we are providing. So if we are to be believed we need to ensure that our body language is a mirror of our message.

Using confident body language and gestures will create an air of confidence about you, which sets up a willingness to believe in your listeners. But this is not something that you can read about and then just go out and do – it needs practice. Practicing the presentation from the concept of stage presence should give you a clear understanding of the impact of it on your audience.

You need to realise that your audience does not start making assessments about you only when you start talking. They will watch you as you approach the speaking area. Do you look happy to be here – is there a smile on your face? If you approach them with a smile your audience will be inclined to smile back at you. This has two advantages; first it will make you feel more confident as a smiling audience creates far less tension, and secondly, an

audience that is smiling is warming towards you and that makes convincing them much easier. They are far more willing to agree with someone they like.

How you stand when you face an audience projects its own message. It is your posture that reflects your attitude and whether or not you are confident. In addition, a good posture helps you to breathe properly and to project your voice effectively. A good relaxed stance also provides you with a good starting point from which to move in any direction. It is your base.

Having reached the speaking area what to do now? Well are you using a lectern? If so place your notes on the lectern and make sure that they are in numbered order and easy to see. Never staple notes. Having to remove notes from the lectern to fold over pages will distract your audience. Merely place the notes on the lectern with page one on the left hand side, and the rest of the pages on the right hand side. To change pages just slide the new page across and over the previous page. This can be done without the audience noticing anything.

If you are using a microphone, this too should have been checked prior to now. If you have to check the sound levels do not tap the microphone or blow into it – it causes damage. Just repeat the usually phrase – “For a sound check, testing – one, two, three”

Take up the speaking position. Stand up straight but not too relaxed, with your feet about shoulder width apart. Try putting one foot slightly ahead of the other, and balance your weight evenly on the balls of your feet. If you are particularly nervous and your legs are shaking, place the rear knee up against the back of the other knee. This will lock the knees together eliminating shaking and swaying.

Now lean forward very slightly, relax your shoulders, but be careful not to let them droop. Keep your chest out and your stomach in. Your head should be erect and your chin should be slightly raised, but make sure that you are comfortable. Let your arms hang naturally at your sides, with the fingers slightly curled.

Take a few deep, full breaths. Make sure that you feel comfortable. Your posture should be alert without being stiff. If this position doesn't feel natural for you try repositioning your feet slightly until your body feels balanced. Comfortable now? Great, then let's get on with gestures.

GESTURES

It's an odd thing, but during conversation we will use our hands to add expressive emphasis to our speech; and hands can be wonderful aids to communication, in fact in our natural conversations most of us will use gestures naturally and spontaneously. Shorn of self-consciousness our gestures are an outcome of the subject and our interest in it.

However, as soon as we stand in front of an audience, the agonising feeling of self-consciousness steals over us, and like many inexperienced speakers we are unsure of what to do with them. Putting them in pockets or behind backs does nothing to solve the problem. And unfortunately, when beginning to add gestures to the presentation some people can over gesture, waving their arms around like someone being attacked by a

swarm of wasps! The secret is practice, practice and still more practice until your gestures feel smooth and natural.

We have the ability to use an infinite variety of individual gestures, however many Australians of Anglo-Saxon cultural descent find it difficult to be open and expressive; while other cultures, such as those of the Middle East or Southern Europe, use their hands freely and expressively when they speak. The specific gestures we make as well as the meaning we assign to them is a product of our cultural training, and some innocent western gesture, such as the making of a circle with the thumb and the forefinger to indicate approval, is considered to be obscene in many areas of the world. It is therefore important that the gestures you use mean the same thing to your audience as they do to you.

So if it is so difficult, why use gestures?

- Gestures add a visual component to our presentations. They reinforce the message and can help the audience to understand the unspoken emphasis of your message.
- By painting a visual picture for the audience, gestures can add a dramatic component which focuses and clarifies the audience's understanding.
- Gestures can also help your audience to understand the major points of your message, and be a sort of visual punctuation.
- By using gestures in the opening parts of your presentation you can use the physical activity to dissipate nervous tension.
- By adding a measure of visual interest you can help maintain your audiences focus on the presentation and you as the presenter. And when using PowerPoint you can bring the listeners attention back to you after you have finished discussing a slide.

So what types of gestures can I use?

While there are infinite varieties of gestures, all can be grouped into four main types

1. Descriptive gestures – which are used to clarify or enhance a verbal message. They can help the audience to understand contrasts, comparisons, visualise size, shape, movement, location and number.
2. Emphatic gestures – which are used to underscore the message. They indicate earnestness and conviction; for example using a clenched fist suggests strong feelings such as anger or determination.
3. Symbolic gestures – used to demonstrate or create a mood. An open palm suggests giving or receiving, while a shrug of the shoulders indicates unconcern or ignorance; and a raised eyebrow can indicate a question.
4. Prompting gestures – these are used to evoke a specific response from the audience. If you wish your audience to raise their hands, or clap or perform some

definite action then enhance the chance of a response by performing the action yourself first.

Gestures made above the shoulder level are said to be '**strong gestures**' and tend to suggest physical height, inspiration, or emotional exultation. Gestures made below shoulder, referred to as '**soft gestures**' are used to indicate lowness, rejection, apathy or condemnation. Those made at or near shoulder level suggest calmness, serenity or anything that is balanced, whether it is mentally, emotionally or physically.

How gestures can be interpreted can be shown by considering the simple gesture of holding out your hands towards the audience. Done with the palm held upwards it often means the act of giving or receiving – the exact meaning depends on the verbal message being delivered. If you repeat the action with the palm held downwards the sense of secrecy, completion or stability can be conveyed. Holding the palm outward towards the audience immediately indicates halting, repulsion, negation or abhorrence. By holding the hands perpendicular to the body with palms facing each other you can indicate a measurement, contrast or compare things. So with one simple gesture many messages can be sent.

Now not all gestures will be appropriate to your presentation, once you have organised your thoughts and planned out your presentation. You need to go through your information for the critical points. How can gestures help to make these points visual to our audience? What types of gestures are best for me to use in these circumstances?

You need to go through the script and note where gestures should be included, for instance if you are asking a rhetorical question, maybe a nonchalant shrug of the shoulders could indicate the answer.

But how can I gesture effectively?

Gestures should be an outcome of your own personality and the message that you are delivering, but the following rules can be an effective way to start on your use of gestures within your presentations.

1. Respond naturally to What you Think, Feel and Say – In normal conversation it is natural for you to emphasis your words with gestures to some degree or other, presentations are larger conversations so to speak, so try to include those gestures which come naturally while you practice. If you are naturally an energetic speaker with a tendency to wave your arms around don't try to inhibit it, but if this doesn't come naturally to you try rehearsing in front of a mirror and watch for those natural movements which instinctively arise out of what you are saying, and then build on them.
2. Create the Message for the Gesture, not the Gesture for the Message – a good gesture comes as a response to the spoken word, when you are delivering your presentation, if you are passionate about the subject then the gesture should come as a natural outcome of the message. Involvement in your subject lessens any inhibitions and allows your natural tendency to take over.

3. Suit the Action to the Word and the Occasion – If you allow your natural gestures to emerge because of your involvement with your message then you would not have the problem of a gesture being contrary to the verbal message. People instinctively recognise when the message and the body language is in opposition and will inevitably believe the body language. They may not understand why it is that they do not believe you, but they will know that somehow you are untrustworthy.

Note also that the larger the audience or auditorium the larger and more expansive your gestures need to be. Create them with more emphasis and at a slower rate. And also the position in which you are required to deliver your presentation may affect the type of gestures you are able to use. As a guest speaker at a dinner meeting, I upset a hot bowl of soup into the lap of the Chairman with my enthusiastic opening remarks, and accompanying gestures!

4. Make Natural, Spontaneous Gesturing a Habit –. Firstly eliminate distracting 'instinctive' movements from your presentation. Most of us have done something like this at one time or another.
 - Rattling keys or loose change in the pockets
 - Twisting a ring
 - Fiddling with your watch
 - Constantly pushing your glasses up the bridge of your nose
 - Playing with a pen or pencil, especially clicking a biro
 - Twiddling a piece of hair

If you find yourself doing any of these make a conscience decision to STOP. Then find those natural movements that enhance your presentation, and start to build on them. Develop them until they become naturally wide, expansive and positive.

Why can't I just stand still?

As a Presenter, movement is the most highly visible physical action you can perform. When it is used purposefully it can be very good and very effective, but when it is bad it is extremely distracting. So never move without a reason.

Whenever you use a body movement during a presentation it brings the audience's immediate attention back to you. So by making your movement mirror the message, you not only grab the audience's attention, you also enhance the impact of the message.

It is tedious to watch a stationary object, - hence the saying something is as interesting as 'watching paint dry!' but at the same time over enthusiastic use of body movement can be extremely distracting, and the audience is tied to watching what you are doing as opposed to listening to what you are saying. The aim is to strive for the middle ground – just enough to keep their attention yet not enough to drive them nuts!

If you are nervous it is a good idea to incorporate into your opening, a definite, strong body movement and gesture which is designed to enhance your opening remarks and which will negate any nervous tendency to indulge in the 'nervy fiddles'

What types of body movement can I use?

Stepping forward towards the audience during your presentation indicates that you have arrived at an important point that you want to share. Taking a step backwards tells the audience that you have completed that point, and you are giving them a chance to digest it before moving on.

However excessive movement is very distracting and when working with PowerPoint walking across the speaking space can mean you are moving between the screen and the projector. Avoid it – and if you must cross from one side to another walk between the audience and the projector.

I've been told to watch my facial expressions – why?

A poker player is the only one who should cultivate a deadpan expression; to a speaker it is a barrier between him and his audience.

People watch a speaker's face, particularly the eyes, while he's speaking, partly because of politeness, but mainly because this is the way in which they receive the precise information to make the message more understandable. Facial expression is often the key to determine the 'exact' meaning being delivered. For example, if a friend smiled broadly at you and said "You're crazy." Would you be offended? Probably not, but if the same statement came accompanied by a sneer, or a look of disgust, what then? The same message delivered with a different facial expression can cause a vastly different reaction in the listener.

Your facial expression will show the audience how you feel about your topic, and they will make an assessment of your sincerity on whether they trust your body language. Also, your facial expression will extract a mirror response from your audience, smile at them and they will smile back. Scowl at them, and watch out! Nod your head to emphasis a point, and you will notice members of the audience doing the same. Remember, what people do will affect how people feel, and how people feel affects what they believe. It is the sincerity that you exude that will connect with the audience.

I'm fine if I don't look at the audience!

But it is the audience who will be responding to the message. Using eye contact is the best way to involve your audience. By using good eye contact you make your message a personal experience for the audience. No matter how large the audience is, each member takes it personally when they feel that you are speaking directly to *them*. If you fail to make eye contact with some members of your audience they will feel ignored and excluded and will probably resist the logic of your message

People tend to believe people who look them straight in the eye; if you don't it can be interpreted as insincerity or even dishonesty. So how can you establish good eye contact with all your audience?

1. Know your Material – If you have to continually check your notes, or return to the lectern to find your place, any bond you have established with your audience will be destroyed. If you know your material well and can work without notes and away from the lectern you can build up a bond of empathy with your audience which will add to the impact of your message.

If you have to use notes, make sure that you constantly re-establish contact with your audience. This is why it is so important not to break that bond when using PowerPoint. Trust the technology; if it is on the lap top screen then it will be up on the wider screen; so you do not need to turn around to check.

2. Establish a Personal Bond with your Listeners. - You do this by speaking to a particular person. In a large auditorium if you choose one person to address your remarks to, all the other people in the vicinity of that person will feel included in the rapport, so direct your remarks to one person within a small group range.

Speak to each person for about five to ten seconds, or complete one sentence before moving on to the next person. Add to that, gestures indicating the general position of the member of the audience, all those in the immediate area can be made to feel that your remarks were addressed to them personally.

When you are speaking to a small group, you have different problems; with fewer people the problem is not missing them out, it is not making them feel overwhelmed. Use the same basic techniques, but sometimes you will need to break direct eye contact and gaze either just over the shoulder, or under the chin. This avoids that eye ball to eye ball confrontation which can be unnerving for both of you.

3. Monitor Visual Feed Back – Your audience will also be sending non-verbal messages of their own, and being alert to these responses you can gauge the audience's response to your presentation, and you can modify it accordingly.

If the audience is not looking at you, they probably aren't listening either. You will have to regain their attention possibly by the use of strong body movement. If the audience looks puzzled or perplexed perhaps they haven't understood the statements or arguments and you may have to provide additional explanation. Watch them as you explain and if they begin to register comprehension then move on to your next point.

Is the audience frowning at you? Remember they can often mirror your facial expression, try smiling at them, and if they respond, consciously try to lighten your facial expression. If they are fidgeting check if you are engaging in any distracting mannerisms, if not you may need to re-engage their interest with humour or a dramatic change of pace or emphasis. Strong body movement will usually refocus the audience's attention on the speaker.

The physical effort you put into your presentations will establish that emotional connection that is so important in creating really effective communication. Now you have answered the Need to Know, and are well on the way to fulfilling the Need to Connect.

Points to Ponder



“Gestures betray a lot about the speaker’s personality, passion and enthusiasm and can make or break a presentation.”

- Jamie Carter, *Everyone’s a Public Speaker ... Even You!* 2003, Vocal Communications, Sydney

Using the voice to create the emotion

People’s unique spoken sound is a combination of the size of their vocal chords, about which we can do nothing, and the resonance which can be deliberately altered by a knowledgeable speaker.

But what is a Good Speaking Voice

One of your goals as a speaker should be to develop a good speaking voice which has the following qualities:

- It is **Pleasant** – conveying a sense of warmth
- It is **natural** - reflecting your personality, and sincerity
- It is **dynamic** – indicating force and strength
- It is **expressive** – portraying emotion, and indicating shades of meaning,
- and it should be **audible** – thanks to good projection, volume and articulation.

Before deciding how your voice quality can be improved or changed it is important to make some kind of judgement about your present voice

What kind of a voice do you have?

Volume

The loudness of your voice or its volume needs to be appropriate to the size and location of your audience. A deliberate change in the volume adds emphasis and impact to your message. But remember there is a difference between speaking softly for effect and inaudibility. A whisper is air without sound, but a fading voice is sound without air. Air causes voice projection.

Pitch

When speaking in a normal conversation everyone adds life and colour to their words - but under the added stress of speaking to a group many people can lose that spontaneity and find their speech comes out flat and wooden. Being able to alter the Pitch, that is the highness or lowness of your voice, will add depth to your presentation.

Tone

The amount of enthusiasm which you project with your voice indicates your voice quality. Plenty of enthusiasm indicates **positive voice quality** and this can motivate your audience to be receptive of your message. However, **negative voice quality** can tend to alienate your audience. The major cause of negative voice quality is tension – emotional or physical, so being able to control your nerves is an aid to changing your voice quality.

Also, be aware that smoking can also affect the quality of your voice, so if you smoke, it might be better to wait until AFTER the presentation before you light up.

OK – but how do I change all that?

To change our vocal variety we should be aware of the following aspects of our speaking.

1. **How fast do we speak?** This is our **Rate of Delivery**, and this is closely associated with your culture, lifestyle and personality, and can often be the most difficult to change. But speaking to an audience demands that you deliver your message at a rate which is easy for your listeners to understand. If you speak too fast you can frustrate your audience because they never have time to digest the information, and will give up the task. A speaker with too slow a rate of delivery makes it difficult to maintain interest and concentration, and as people think much faster than they speak you will lose your listeners.

The most effective rate of delivery falls within the range of 120 to 160 words per minute. This rate is easy to maintain without rushing and slow enough to allow your audience to fully understand what it is you are saying. By deliberately varying your rate within your presentation you can add emotion and emphasis to your words.

2. The English Language is spoken in musical tones, and a good speaker can use up to 25 different notes to convey the precise meaning or to add variety to their speech.

Monotonous speakers will often only use two or three. **Pitching** your voice up or down can change your delivery dramatically.

3. **Volume** is created by air, and air is produced by using the correct breathing techniques.
4. **Timing** depends on practice, and on being able to listen to how other good speakers use rate and pausing. The use of pause is one of the most effective weapons in emotional speaking, pauses can add emphasis, allow time for laughter to subside, and allow the audience to think about a question you have posed. Also the **hesitation pause** can induce anticipation and expectation, a wonderful tool for dramatic presentations.

INFLECTION

One of the most important characteristics of speaking is known as **inflection**. This means raising the pitch, or emphasis on a particular word to add stress to that word. It can be used to stress the word itself, or to change the meaning or implication of a sentence. Look at this simple sentence.

MARY HAD A LITTLE LAMB

Now just using only those simple words, but adding voice inflection try to answer the following questions.

1. *Who owned the lamb?*
2. *What was the size of the lamb?*
3. *What pet did Mary have?*

Inflection is often the best way of indicating the exact meaning you wish to convey, and more misunderstandings are caused by the wrong use of inflection than by any other vocal trick.

So to improve your speaking voice remember these three things

1. **Correct breathing**, this will enable good volume and projection
2. **Correct articulation** – avoid misunderstanding because your audience didn't understand what you said. Correct pronunciation will give your audience a head start in understanding what you said.
3. **Finally – Practice, practice, practice** - How?

READ ALOUD, READ EVERYTHING ALOUD

Read poetry, read newspaper articles, read anything and everything aloud. Only then will you begin to learn the "feel" of the English language, only then will you begin to recognise pitch, rate and timing, and gradually they will become an inherent part of your speaking voice.

Here's some thing to practice on right now!

**I need not your needles,
They're useless to me.
For the needing of needles
is needless you see.**

**But did your neat trousers
But need to be kneed,
I then should have need
Of your needles indeed!!**

Tongue Twisters –are a great way to get the muscles of the face working again.



Problems

There are two types of problems with presentations –

- Problems with equipment, and
- Problems with people!

Problems with Equipment

“Murphy said that whatever can go wrong will go wrong. Murphy loves computers, especially PowerPoint presentations.” Anon

By now you will probably know that the answer to this is to ensure that you have a backup visual aid to help support your presentation.

The Trischel trainers always carry a flip chart, and quite often a data projector.

Presentations take time out of someone’s day – and therefore we have a limited amount available to us in which to give our information. If our equipment fails to work and we spend twenty minutes of our thirty allotted minutes in trying to get it working again – we have failed on all levels.

These kinds of problems usually occur with the latest technical gadgetry – and the rule is if you cannot **immediately** discern the problem and fix it – move onto the backup.

Because we unthinkingly place such a high emphasis on this type of equipment we can be reluctant to make the switch. There is a tendency to believe that it just needs a couple of seconds more to fix the problem; until finally the realisation dawns on us that it is not going to happen and we have already run out of time.

Learn from those who have placed their own credibility on the line by doing just that. Even now there is one presenter who will still try to fix it regardless – luckily the other one just walks over and switches it off!!

This is why you should always make two lots of visual aids – for that one time that you are going to need it. And if you do so, then you must take it to the presentation with you. It is no use having your back up flip chart in the car, when the car park is two blocks away.

Problems with People

People ask questions. People want to know answers – usually right in the middle of your carefully prepared and timed presentation.

So right at the start state your policy on questions. If you are happy to answer questions throughout the presentation, then say so. If you would prefer to give the presentation straight through then answer questions – then state that up front.

My preferred option is the second. Often a question can be answered by information which is coming up later in the presentation, and so I will tell my audience that I would like to give them the information and then I will be very happy to answer questions.

So How to Answer those questions?

First listen to them – all the way through. Don't try to second guess the question you might get it wrong. Some people find it difficult to ask a simple question, so be alert to the main points and if necessary clarify with the questioner to make sure you have it correct.

Then – what is it exactly from your presentation does this question relate to. Is there a slide that deals with it. If so – go to it. Bring it back up and using this as a prompt, answer the question. You may need to expand on the information, but the slide is a good place to start by focussing your (and the questioners) attention on what has already been covered.

What happens if I don't have the information with me?

The question might refer to information that you had decided not to introduce, and while there is nothing in your presentation you do know the answer. Then cover it quickly and succinctly as possible. If the questioner still wants further information you can offer to send or email it ,where it can be covered in more detail.

But I don't know the answer!

Do not try to bluff your way through – you will be caught out. It is much more professional to admit that you do not have that information at the present time – but you will obtain it and forward it as soon as possible – **then do so!**

Far too often presenters make this commitment and fail to follow through. Your credibility takes a dive when you do that. So if you make any kind of commitment that requires a follow up **make a note of it and follow up.**

Conclusion

“Along with computer literacy, professional presentation skills are becoming a new survival skill in the workplace.” - Ethel M. Cook

In many instances you will not be the only company giving a presentation to an organisation. Their decision to buy or employ your company will be based on the quality of your presentations.

If you have developed good personal communication skills as well as a professional presentation standard, then your presentations will stand out from the crowd.

With your understanding of the effective communication principles you will not make the mistake of using the wrong system; and by carefully balancing the need to know with the need to connect you will build up a connection with your client that will ensure a personal commitment to your goal.

If 'professional presentation skills' are now the 'new survival skills' then you are now well placed not only to survive - but also to excel.

About the Author



Trish Springsteen - Trish is Australia's Leading Expert in Empowering Introverts, a multi-international award winning mentor, speaker, international bestselling author and host of Get Known Be Seen WebTV. Trish is passionate about creating confident communicators and is the co-founder and owner of Trischel, a company dedicated to bringing communication and effective speaking skills to individuals, businesses and organisations.

Trish is a member of Women's Network of Australia, Business and Professional Women (BPW), Motivational Speakers Australia and Women Speakers Association. Trish has spoken on national and international stages and she has written and presented a variety of training packages for industry bodies and private companies.

She has a BBus (Health Administration); holds Cert IV in Training & Assessment and is an Accredited Extended Disc Practitioner. Trish is experienced in leadership, management communication, business skills and is a highly sought after Personal Communication Mentor, Coach and Speaker.

Trish is the author, co-author and contributing author to fourteen books and is featured in Motivational Speakers of Australia.

Book a complimentary 15 minute Zoom Discovery Session with Trish at

www.calendly.com/trischel/15min

If you wish to book Trish to speak at one of your events contact her at info@trischel.com.au and download her speaking profile at

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If you have enjoyed this Ebook, why not follow Trish's thoughts on Speaking, Communication, Leadership and Personal Achievements on her blog at

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